

VZCZCXRO2480  
OO RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHMO #2878/01 3460851  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 120851Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5783  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 012878

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/RUS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: GAYDAR'S WEEKEND INTERVIEWS LEAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT  
ALLEGED POISONING UNANSWERED

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns: 1.4 (b).

-----  
Summary  
-----

¶1. (C) A December 6 Financial Times article and two TV interviews with ex-Prime Minister Gaydar broadcast the weekend of December 8 have shed little light on Gaydar's alleged poisoning November 22 in Dublin. Although Gaydar's Moscow doctors have been unable or unwilling to state that Gaydar had been intentionally poisoned on November 22, Gaydar himself joined Anatoliy Chubais in asserting that he had been poisoned; Gaydar went further in connecting the alleged attempt on him with the killing of ex-FSB operative Litvinenko. Gaydar, while asserting that he did not believe the perpetrators were Russian officials, allowed that it was possible that others in Russia could have been behind the attempt on him. Gaydar denied to the Swedish Ambassador that he had been poisoned and was "angry" that others, presumably Chubais, had alleged foul play. In a later conversation, Gaydar told our Ambassador that what he experienced was not run-of-the-mill food poisoning. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ex-Prime Minister Gaydar followed his December 6 article in the Financial Times with two interviews on Moscow television over the weekend of December 8 in which he continued to assert that he was poisoned on November 22 while at a conference in Dublin. (Gaydar fell ill at the conference, was hospitalized in Dublin then returned, at his own request, to Moscow where he spent several days recuperating in a clinic. United Energy Systems Chairman Anatoliy Chubais was quick to label Gaydar's illness a poisoning, and implied that exiled Russian billionaire and foe of President Putin Boris Berezovskiy might be responsible. In the Times article, Gaydar was careful to note that doctors in Moscow did not use the word "poisoning" in their diagnosis "for reasons of professional ethics." (Gaydar said they could not make such a diagnosis as sixty hours had passed since the poison had allegedly entered his system. He said nothing in the article, or in the interviews, to suggest that doctors in Ireland had suspected poisoning. The Irish Embassy confirmed to us that they had no evidence to support a claim of deliberate poisoning.)

¶3. (C) In an interview with the REN weekly news program "Nedelya" broadcast December 9, Gaydar said he was certain that he had not been poisoned by Russian officials, but he thought it possible that others in Russia or the secret services of some other state could be responsible. In a second interview, broadcast on December 10 the NTV program "Segodnya," Gaydar again asserted that he had been poisoned and termed the intentions of the perpetrators to be "not in the interest of the Russian state." In the television interviews, Gaydar linked what had happened to him with the

poisoning of ex-FSB agent and London-based critic of the Putin government Aleksandr Litvinenko. The only evidence of such a link offered by Gaydar was the timing of the two events.

14. (C) Gaydar's allegation that he had been poisoned has provoked varying preliminary responses here, with some accepting his version at face value, and others more skeptical. Gaydar family friend and Ekho Moskvyy journalist Yevgeniya Albats told us December 8 that she had met Gaydar and his daughter Mariya on December 7. Albats thought Gaydar had been poisoned, but seemed uncomfortable with that version of events, and later in the conversation suggested that Gaydar was "under some pressure" from Chubais, who had asserted almost immediately that Gaydar was the victim of foul play and was pushing Gaydar to hew to that line. Albats admitted that Gaydar's Moscow physicians had to her knowledge not confirmed Gaydar's allegations. Gaydar has presented different versions to his diplomatic contacts. A Moscow-based Swedish diplomat, on the other hand, told us that Gaydar had told his ambassador that he was angry and embarrassed at allegations that he had been poisoned. In a later conversation, immediately prior to the publication of the Financial Times article, Gaydar told our Ambassador that what he experienced was not run-of-the-mill food poisoning.

15. (C) In a December 9 conversation, "Other Russia's" Garry Kasparov --who is otherwise predisposed to believe the worst about the current government-- rehearsed many of the arguments used by observers here to cast doubts on Gaydar's version of events:

-- why was Chubais immediately so certain that Gaydar had

MOSCOW 00012878 002 OF 002

been poisoned?

-- if Gaydar thought he had been poisoned, why would he return to the likely home base of those attempting to poison him? Kasparov found Gaydar's rationale, in the Financial Times piece, that he returned to Russia because the Moscow doctors were more familiar with his medical history, "not convincing";

-- Gaydar's doctors have not confirmed that he was poisoned;

-- it was odd that the Dublin doctors would not have been alert to the possibility of poisoning, as the Litvinenko case was unfolding at the same time in London;

-- if he had been poisoned, why was Gaydar so certain that "Russian officials" could not be the culprits?

16. (C) A colleague at the British Embassy also found Gaydar's version of events "not convincing," but was not willing to exclude the possibility that the former Prime Minister may have been poisoned.

-----  
Comment  
-----

17. (C) Although on a much smaller scale than the murder of Litvinenko, this episode is even more difficult to understand, as it cannot even be said with certainty that Gaydar was poisoned. Whether it was a failed murder attempt, an attempt to distract attention from the Litvinenko murder, or just food poisoning is not clear and may never be.  
BURNS